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ABSTRACT

To determine whether the diocesan newspapers of the Catholic church are based on an autonomous, adversarial model or on an institutional, public relations model of the press, a survey was conducted of 148 editors and 145 bishops or publishers of such newspapers. Results showed that the editors and bishops agreed on the three major roles of the diocesan press--providing news of significance to Catholics, intradiocesan communication, and religious education--but ranked them in opposite order. Editors seemed to have a precarious balance of adversarial and institutional norms, putting primacy on the news function of their papers, while bishops emphasized the institutional communication and religious education roles of the press. The findings suggest that the pull from institutional communication demands and those of a semiautonomous watchdog creates great stress on editors of such publications. (Appendixes contain a statement of purpose of the diocesan press and a list of the statements to which the editors and bishops responded in the survey.) (FL)

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Institutional Stress:

Conflicting Normative Models in the Catholic Press

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Professionals generally pose difficulty for formal organizations because of their greater allegiance to professional norms despite the pressure of socialization to institutional norms.[1] This difficulty, and its concomitant stress, may well be compounded when the professionals are journalists and the institution is the Catholic church.

Debate on the precise role of the 153 diocesan newspapers whose combined ciruculation reaches 5 million American households stems from precisely this institutional problem. The roots of the issue lie in changes wrought by the Second Vatican Council (1963-1965)[2] and the professionalization of diocesan newspapers which began in the 1950's.[3] The problems led to a conference between representatives of the American bishops and the Catholic Press Association in 1969.[4] While this conference clarified the issues and laid down guidelines for further discussion between editors and their "publishers," no further conferences were held.[5]

At the center the debate is both a value conflict between the bishop-publishers whose primary concern is the faith of their flock and the editors who seem to seek a press based on the norms of the American commercial press and the question of whether these newspapers are of the independant, adversarial models or the institutional, public relations model. The bishops and editors have not resolved the issue,[6] but few studies exist on the problem.

At first impression, it may seem that the debate is but another variation of the public relations-corporate management conflict, particularly because these papers operate under the authority of the bishop-publisher,[7] commonly with his financial support,[8] and are official organs. Yet, the tension goes beyond that formulation because clear cut public relations model for this press. Indeed, the editors seem to perceive this press as essentially independent of the public relations role, even if others in the institution perceive the newspaper differently. Inherent in the editor's view is a

drive for autonomy and freedom from direct interference in the product. Bishops, on the other hand, look to the press as an institutional voice. It is a corporate communications problem, and more.

Vatican II adopted a position supporting the autonomous model:

> before Vatican II council, the Catholic press largely conceived its task to be the explanation and defense of papal teaching. After the Council, the Catholic press found itself facing the difficult problem of how to report and interpret news that differed directly from official Church teaching.[9]

After centuries of operation on a monarchical model, the Church moved in Vatican II toward a more democratic model in which greater authority rests with local Ordinaries,[10] national councils of bishops, and in the laity. John Jessup observed in Life:

> Their Church is more Catholic and less Roman, less monarchic and more constitutional, less doctrinaire and more dialogic, less monolithic and more mosaic, less static and more mobile, less preoccupied with the City of God and more in love with the City of Man.[11]

With such fundamental changes in the structure, the ideal role of the press was given in a major document which forefully upheld the right to be informed:

> If public opinion is to be properly formed, it is necessary that, right from the start, the public be given free access to both the sources and the channels of information and be allowed freely to express its own views. Freedom of opinion and the right to be informed go hand in hand. Pope John XXIII, Pope Paul VI and the Second Vatican Council have all stressed this right to information which today is essential for the individual and for society generally.[12]

Diocesan editors, anxious to help form public opinion quickly began raising issues and covering problems. Coverage of defecting priests, financial problems, ongoing debate of theological issues, generally the stuff of an adversarial press, faced bishop-publishers as the full sweep of changes washed over the American church. More than changes in content and style, these were moves away from the institutional, public relations model to an autonomous, reader representative even adversarial model.

The shift brought no small amount of upheaval. Finnegan described the period 1968-1974 as one of "crisis of authority," in which editors debated the extent to which their newspapers were at all subject to the authority of the bishop.[13] The issue formally surfaced in 1969 through a conference on diocesan newspapers. Surveys of bishops and editors preceded the meeting, as did formal position papers.

In a study of bishops, Archbishop Hannan found only half were satisfied with their own newspaper.[14] Those who were satisfied supported professional norms in an independent newspaper. The dissatisfied bishops criticized the free press concept of editors, editorial liberalism, sensationalism, and inaccurate portrayal of the bishop's view. In addition to charges of scandal mongering and sensationalism, the press was labelled as "no longer representative," "poor," and "not balanced."[15] Editorial disloyalty, criticism of bishops and the pope, and rejection of bishop-publisher criticism were also cited.

Hannan also found that despite the institutional setting, editors had extensive freedom in selection of stories and editorial policy, augmented by very limited conferences between bishop and editor. This autonomy was an additional irritant, but overall the bishops described their relationships as cordial.

In a study of editors, Sherry found three distinct sources of bishop-editor friction.[16] The first was restriction on publication of articles on church problems through not on church doctrine. The seconded was a bishop withholding newsworthy material from the editor but leaking it to the secular press or others. The third was lack of discussion about the precise role of the Catholic press. Editors, overall seemed to see the bishop as enforcing a public relations role by preventing publication of bad news while simultaneously withholding

newsworthy material and limiting discussion about the role of the press. Clearly, editors hold norms from a model based on the commercial, independent press, but one connected by interest to the institution.

After 1974, Finnegan concluded the central issue shifted to accurate reflection of pluralism within the Church.[17] These self-critical articles point to a change in the dominant view held by editors, a change to an autonomous if not adversarial press alert to the roles of dialogue, administrative watchdog, and means of communication from laity to hierarchy.

On the international level, Vatican II spurred a similar review of the roles of journalists and the Catholic press. The International Union of the Catholic Press (UCIP)[18] historically more liberal owing to its roots in the partisan Catholic press of Europe, developed its 1977 world congress around the them, "A Press For The People."[19] Central to the theme were the rights and character of the readers.

The right of people to information was affirmed as the necessary component of true freedom.[20] The journalists is to be "exempt from all political, ideological, and economic pressure.[21] Official Church sources were scored for providing their own press with "primarily official information which is not always relevant to the actual situation in the Christian community.[22] And the role of the journalist was held to be a central one in creating authentic dialogue within the Church.[23] The participants called on the Church hierarchy to recognize the pluralism within the Church and its effect on the press.[24] Clearly, these journalists perceived their role not as official voices of the Church, but as representatives of the laity and informational intermediaries between the institution and its members. The model seems closely modelled after the independent press, with Church officials viewed as government and the press a watchdog and interlocutor.

The 1980 congress of UCIP worked under the theme, "A Press For a Communicating Society," with particular attention to the role of the Catholic press in the society at large and within the society of the Church. The hierarchy was challenged to make information more readily available and to employ professional press secretaries.[25] The journalist was held to be most faithful to the Chruch when fully exercising professional judgement and skills.[26] The readership was characterized as a discerning group of adults who gather information from multiple sources before reaching conclusions.[27] Emphasis was given to education and preparation of journalists for the profession.[28]

Professionalization of the editorial staff may well be a second force for a revised model, in part because lay journalists began replacing clerics, and in part because the norms brought to the press were those of an adversarial rather than public relations press.

Emphasis on professional preparation of journalists began in America after World War II, when a corps of lay editors freshly educated in journalism schools, took their places in diocesan newspapers.[29] Real[30] found this also a time when professionalization developed in a set of independent Catholic opinion journals which emerged at the same time. Professionalization over the past 30 years seems to have been a significant factor in the amount and nature of self-criticism.[31] Much of this criticism assumes a model of Church press fostered by Vatican II and enthusiastically endorsed by UCIP. Clearly, editors increasingly viewed their role as thought-provoking and challenging in the tradition of the Hutchins Commission's call for social responsibility:

> The time is ripe for us in the diocesan press to quit thinging of success and journalistic effectiveness in terms of circulation figures which tell us more about the abediential loyalty of our subscribers than they do about the quality of newspapers to which they subscribe.[32]

Scotton and Thorn[33] found editors deeply imbued with professional norms, whether lay or clergy, and whether formally educated in journalism education

or not. Indeed, clergy exhibited higher normative responses. Overall, the editors perceived substantially lower levels of professional performance in diocesan newspapers than in their commercial counterparts. At a conference on the Catholic press, editors frequently observed that they are prevented from fulfilling their professional norms because their newspapers are treated as public relations organs by the bishops.[34] Whatever the fallacy of their perceptions, these editors appear to strongly reject the public relations model for themselves as unprofessional and hold to a more adversarial, autonomous model. The dissonance between high professional aspiration and perceived low level attainment would seem to heighten the tension of editors.

Because so many diocesan newspapers depend on the bishop for funding, through either direct subsidy or mandatory circulation to all church members, financial issues pose an additional source of tension.[35] Given limited conferences overall, bishops an editors would seem to have substantially reduced opportunities to construct a mutually agreeable model of the newspaper and bring their expectations into close alignment.

The literature in this area is dominantly philosophical and impressionistic. What quantitative data exist are noncomparable, and overall the literature is sparse. This study was mounted to develop a clearer portrait of bishop and editor attitudes, to examine the bishop-editor relationship, and to explore the level of professional norms within each group.

METHOD

Identical questionnaires were drafted for bishops and editors with word changes appropriate to the respondent. Bishop-publishers were operationally defined as the Ordinary of the diocese listed in the Official Catholic Directory.[36] Editors were defined as the highest ranking individual listed among editors in the Catholic Press Directory.[37] Following a pretest, a total of 148 editors and 145 bishops were surveyed by mail.[38]

Questions were developed from the criticism themes used by Finnegan[39] and a list of general issue questions drafted by the editor-publisher relations committee of the Catholic Press Association.[40] Role-related items were addressed with both open and closed questions.[41] The survey was pretested with a group of bishops, editors, and researchers. The response rate was 68% (100) from editors and 64% (93) from bishops.

FINDINGS

As a group, the bishops are older: 74% are between 50 and 69; 49% are in their 60s. Over half (54%) have been in their present diocese less than 10 years. A surprising sub-group of 23% have had direct journalism experience prior to becoming bishop. The experience ranged from editing a school paper to reporting a secular daily.[42]

Clerics comprise 47% of the editors, who are overwhelmingly male (89%) and middle-aged (76% are between the ages of 40 and 69). They are well educated: 65% have either a graduate degree or graduate study; only 12% lack a bachelor's degree. As a group they are not the products of journalism schools: 31% have journalism degrees, but 64% have had formal journalism education. Their backgrounds prior to becoming editor in their present diocese range from secular media to church administration. Table 1 ranks these occupations. Pastors dominate as a single group (17%), but 19% came from some other Catholic media position, and another 17% came from work in the secular media. Overall, 45% came from another media position which was likely to provide at least some exposure to professional norms in the workplace.

Table 1

Previous Experience of Bishops and Editors

Bishops	N	Editors	N
Report, edit Catholic press	(6)	Pastor	(17)
Editor, scholastic press	(6)	Editor, Catholic paper	(12)
Radio production	(1)	Non-media, non-church	(12)
Reporter, secular press	(1)	Editor, secular press	(10)
Editor, Catholic magazine	(1)	Reporter, Catholic press	(7)
Reporter, Spanish press	(1)	Reporter, secular press	(7)
Reporter, press unknown	(1)	Diocesan administration	(6)
Unspecified media work	(3)	Other Catholic media	(5)
TOTAL:	20	Public relations, Advertising	(4)
		Military	(4)
		Other religious work	(5)
		Business Manager	(1)
		TOTAL:	90

When asked to list the major roles of the newspaper in the doicese, bishops and editors agreed on the three dominant roles, but differed on the ranking. Table 2 lists the roles as ranked by the two groups.

Table 2

Diocesan Press Roles Ranked First

Role	Bishops	Editors
News of significance to Catholics	18% (10)	48% (31)
Intra-diocesan Communication	29% (16)	20% (13)
Religious education	25% (14)	17% (11)
Link believer to the Church	11% (6)	8% (5)
Bishops communication instrument	7% (4)	5% (3)
Catholic interpretation of news	4% (2)	3% (2)
Develop awareness of moral issues	2% (1)	- -
Forum for Dialogue on Catholic issues	2% (1)	- -
Miscellaneous	4% (2)	- -
TOTAL:	100%* 56	100%* 65

*percentage off due to rounding

Rank of all Role Citations

Role	Bishops	Editors
News of significance to Catholics	20% (30)	26% (44)
Intradiocesan communication	21% (32)	22% (37)
Religious education	23% (34)	19% (32)
Forum for dialogue on Catholic issues	5% (7)	8% (14)
Miscellaneous roles	7% (11)	8% (14)
Bishop's communication instrument	7% (10)	6% (10)
Develop awareness of moral issues	5% (8)	4% (7)
Catholic interpretation of the news	5% (7)	4% (7)
Link believer to the Church	8% (12)	2% (4)
TOTAL:	100%*151	100%*169

*percentage off due to rounding.

Not all respondents listed multiple roles, but the stability of the aggregate mentions points to expectedly strong consensus among these two groups about the major roles and their priority. The reversed rankings of total mentions underscores the differing perspectives of bishop-publishers and their editors. The editors are quite aware of the several demands of an institutional paper made by bishops, but as Hannan and Sherry found, editors see news as a compelling interest; bishops do not.

Responses to 11 role-related attitudinal items produced the group means and differences listed in Table 3. The groups include all bishops and all editors, bishops with journalism experience (J-Bishops), and bishops with no journalism experience (NJ-Bishops).

Table 3

Means and Differences on Press Role Statements*

Item	Bishops n=91**	Editors n=100**	Diff.	J-Bishops n=20	NJ-Bishops n=60	Diff.
1	1.4674	1.6100	-.1426	1.3800	1.4910	-.111
2	1.9438	1.6700	.2738	2.0000	1.8570	.143
3	1.3043	1.5800	-.2757	1.3330	1.2330	.100
4	2.1413	1.7100	.4313	2.0000	2.0720	-.072
5	1.7143	1.5657	.1486	1.5710	1.6890	-.118
6	1.5109	1.9394	-.4285	1.5230	1.4590	.064
7	1.8333	1.5800	.2533	1.7890	1.8270	-.038
8	1.2609	1.3800	-.1191	1.1420	1.2330	-.091
9	1.9444	1.6900	.2544	1.3500	1.9130	-.563
10	3.2637	2.7800	.5837	3.5780	3.2900	.288
11	1.3548	1.3800	-.0252	1.4280	1.2620	-.143

*Scale based on the following values: 1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=no opinion, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree. The full table is in Appendix B.

**N varies ± 2 for J-Bishops and NJ-Bishops; editor N drops to 99 for items 5 and 6.

Role Statements about the diocesan newspaper

1. Should provide news of the church not in the secular press.
2. Should connect readers to events in the world.
3. Should provide religious instruction.
4. Should provide the pluralism of opinions in the Church.
5. Should report fully and accurately on diocesan problems.
6. Should try to present a positive image of the Church.
7. Laity have a right to a press which reflects their views of Church
8. Should be a vehicle for the bishop to minister to the faithful.
9. Is obliged to report dissident theological views, clearly indentifying those as dissident and unofficial.
10. Should be a forum for discussion of diverse theological views.
11. Should create a sense of community among believers.

Agreement on all items between the bishops and editors correlated +0.883 ($p < .001$). It was strongest in the area of least mention in the role citations: building community (.0252) and weakest in the areas suggested by Hannan and Sherry: the forum function, presenting a pluralism of opinions, and presenting a positive image (the public relations function). At the same time, there is surprising concurrence on the full reporting of problems in the diocese, perhaps because the individual interpretations of this statement cloud the real separation. Read with the forum, pluralism, and public image items, the news question loses some import. More surprising was that only 12% of the editors disagreed with the statement on the public relations function.

The bishop sub-group with journalism experience stood somewhat apart from their peers. The mean differences, except for the item on dissident theological views are not significantly large. While close to their peers, the journalist bishops still held views closer to those of editors on the majority of roles. Curiously, editors were almost exactly between the two bishop sub-groups on reporting dissident views. And, journalist-bishops more strongly disagreed with the forum function on theological issues than other

bishops and editors. They also were more supportive of a newspaper being the bishop's vehicle than were either their peers or the editors. In general, the journalist bishops seemed somewhat more attuned to the professional norms and more willing to use the newspaper.

When editors are divided into the clergy and lay sub-groubs, the responses show a mean difference range of .033 to .290 with an average difference of .108 for all 11 items. Clergy editors are less supportive of the religious instruction (.199) and public relations functions (.118) than lay editors. They are more supportive of the theological forum (.290), pluralism of opinions (.123) and laity rights (.123) statements than lay editors. In general, the responses of the lay editors were more like those of the bishops, and clergy editors were farther from the bishop responses in the direction of the values espoused by commercial press. Nonetheless, both sub-groups are, on the whole, quite similar in response, closer to each other in means than the bishop sub-groups.

The structure in which the editors operate varies somewhat from diocese to diocese. Most often the editor reports directly to the bishop-publisher according to 58% of the responding editors and 52% of the bishops. Editors report to a publication board in the diocese of 21% of the bishops and 14% of the editors. Some combination of publication board and direct reporting was cited by 20% of the bishops and 10% of the editors. The division of structure does not depend on circulation of the newspaper, for little difference emerged when the structure was compared with circulation.

Given the high congruence of attitudes in general between editors and bishops and the varied lines of responsibility from bishop to editor, contact between the two becomes of considerable concern in analyzing the socialization process and the problem resolution process related to covering the news. Of fundamental concern in the frequency with which bishops and editors

confer and the extent to which various possible subjects related to the newspaper are discussed. Irregularity best characterizes the meeting patterns. For 43% of editors and 26% of bishops meetings are held only as problems arise or as the bishop is interviewed for the paper. Weekly meetings are the norm for 19% of the bishops and 16% of the editors; bimonthly or monthly meetings are the pattern for 39% of bishops and 25% of editors. Surprisingly, annual meetings are typical for 7% of bishops and 10% of the editors.

The frequency of meeting seems comfortable, for 83% of bishops and 82% of editors favor the present frequency. The remainder would like more frequent meetings. These meetings seem longer to editors than to bishops: over half (51%) of bishops said they last less than 30 minutes; 38% of editors said the same. With most meetings set as problems arise, the next most common method is by a mutually arranged time (28%) and editors arranging them 19% of the time.

The topics of these meetings related to the newspaper are listed in Table 4:

Table 4

Topics Discussed in Bishop-Editor Meetings

Topics	Bishops	Editors
Finances	64%	70%
Policy/philosophy	64%	48%
News/feature stories	43%	39%
Editorials	45%	31%
Letters to editor	18%	18%

That finances dominate is not surprising given the dependance of newspapers support from the bishop. For the editors to engage in these discussion with such frequency points to their role as financial manager for the newspaper as well as chief newsman. The power of the purse, combined with such a high frequency of policy and philosophy discussions may suggest a link between

Financial support and overall policy. Specific content takes second place to the broader issues. Perhaps more surprising is that policy and philosophy are not discussed by 30% of editors and 36% of bishops.

If a potentially sensitive or controversial item is being considered for publication, it is brought to the bishop's attention prior to publication for 65% of the bishops and 61% of the editors. For 31% of the bishops and 36% of the editors said the article would appear without consultation. Such an item would not appear according to 4% of bishops and 3% of editors. When the issue is raised, the bishops and editors reported that they mutually agree on the handling, with most editors choosing to alert the bishop rather than avoid a mutual decision. More journalist bishops (71%) than their peers (60%) reported that they would review a sensitive item prior to publication.

Fewer bishops (5%) than editors (14%) are sure no sensitive item would appear without the bishop's knowledge prior to publication. Should the item appear, most bishops (65%) said they would telephone the editor to discuss the problem, and 49% of the editors reported their bishop would do the same. The bishop's reaction would be passed to the editor by an intermediary for 14% of the bishops; 8% of editors said their bishop would do the same. About 17% of the editors described a more elaborate set of procedures, usually scaled to the seriousness and type of issue involved.

The editor's role within the doicesan administration seems quite precisely defined. Most bishops (71%) and editors (69%) reported the editor is not part of the management team but remains in close contact with diocesan administrators. Twenty percent of both bishops and editors reported that the editor is part of the management team in their diocese. About 8% of the respondents in both groups said the editor is outside the administrative structure and has minimal contact with diocesan officials.

Despite the problems, diocesan newspapers continue to receive strong support from bishops. Only 4% said they would cease publication for financial reasons; another 18% said they were unsure. Among editors, 25% said they were unsure whether their bishop would suspend the newspaper for financial reasons. The overwhelming majority of bishops (67%) have the newspaper sent to every diocesan household. Not surprisingly, 84% of the editors favor such a system. For editors, this circulation pattern resolves the financial pattern by guaranteeing a large base for diocesan support. For bishops, this plan seems to fulfill the roles elaborated earlier. Another source of norms can be the media used by each group for news and information. Comparisons of bishop and editor reading material in the religious and secular press turned up interesting differences. Table 5 lists the major religious and secular publications given as regular reading material.[43]

Table 5

Publications Regularly Read*

Bishops - religious	Editors - religious
Diocesan newspapers (45)	Diocesan newspapers (37)
America (30)	National Catholic Reporter (34)
National Catholic Reporter(30)	America (31)
Theological journals (25)	U.S. Catholic (26)
Commonweal (22)	St. Anthony Messenger (19)
Origins (16)	Commonweal (18)
Priest (16)	Our Sunday Visitor (17)
L'Osservatore Romano (15)	Christian Science Monitor (7)
Our Sunday Visitor (14)	National Catholic Register (7)
St. Anthony Messenger (13)	Twin Circle (6)
The Wanderer (13)	Ligourian (5)
U.S. Catholic (12)	Orgins (5)
National Catholic Register (12)	Sojourner (4)
Bishops - secular	**Editors - secular**
Time (45)	Local dailies (51)
Local dailies (37)	Newsweek (33)
Newsweek (24)	Time (29)
N.Y. Times (18)	N.Y. Times (23)
U.S. News & World Report (10)	U.S. News & World Report (12)
Chicago Studies (6)	Editor and Publisher (9)
National Geographic (6)	Wall Street Journal (7)

*Figures in parentheses are frequencies of citation.

Clearly, both groups are reading about the same range of religious and secular publications except that bishops appear to be reading more religious publications overall, including L'Osservatore Romano, the official newspaper of the Vatican, which no editor cited.[44] Editors, on the other hand, show less interest in the conservative Catholic publications like Twin Circle and Register and Wanderer. That Time dominates bishop responses may reflect its reputation as better on religious news than Newsweek or U.S. News among magazines.[44]

DISCUSSION

The central issue, that of the professional within a formal institution, particularly one with developed doctrine and structure, fits the pattern elaborated by Canlow and others.[45] But, it also goes beyond that formulation owing to the ill-defined roles of this institutionally financed newspaper.

The press to which an editor comes remains dominatly an institutional press, though one whose precise role and nature is not clearly established. The institution itself began a fundamental shift from monarchial to democratic structure with Vatican II, putting greater emphasis on the flow of information and the role of an informed laity. The ideals set out in Vatican documents affirm rights to information, freedom of journalists, and the value of media. At the same time, the diocesan press reflects the restrictions inherent in an institutional organ: nonpublication of sensitive material, mandated publication of other material, and calls for loyalty. The mixed roles cited by bishop and editor point to the conflicting definitions within which the press operates. Further, this press is heavily dependant on the largesse of bishops for financial survival.

Editors bring to this press a set of professional norms which cherish an adversarial, independant model and reject an institutional, public relations model. While editors do not strongly disagree with the need to present a positive image of the Church in their publications, neither do they consider

their publications house organs. Nor does high bishop-editor agreement on rankings of the major roles help resolve the fundamental dilemma. Indeed, the major roles are themselves potentially conflictual, and the differing institutional roles of editor and bishop diminish the prospect for ready agreement.

Socialization of editors is certainly possible in the right context, and these editors likely come to the press prepared to be socialized to its unique requirements.[46] However, the limited contact between bishops and editors greatly inhibits the socialization, as does the considerable gulf between a professional and his employer.

What emerges is a general agreement on the broadest level about what the role of the diocesan press, but case by case elaboration of the priorities as conflicts between roles are hammered out. Editors would seem likely to establish for themselves an acceptable balance between their fondness for the adversarial ideal and the institutional character of the newspaper, but one which may be precarious. Certainly a clash over publication of a sensitive article or the leaking of a major story to the secular press would raise serious questions about the role of the diocesan newspaper or the editor. In such a clash the bishop surely has the upper hand, should he choose to use it. At the same time, it is not at all clear that bishops are any more concerned about the newspaper than about their schools, orphanages, hospitals, social programs, seminaries, priest senates, and other operational subdivisions of the diocese.

Bishops, fundamentally, are administrators of large organizations in which the newspaper is but one division. Those who have previous experience in the media likely feel more at ease working with the editor or taking a great role as publisher. But for the editor, a publisher who is distant from the newspaper creates additional burdens. Establishing a clear understanding of

which topics and which approaches will bring censure cannot be easy. To be sure, a bishop will call an editor about a displeasing item, particularly if it appeared without warning. Editors can resolve the uncertainty by notifying the bishop in advance, as many do, but doing so invites reconsideration of the balance between models.

The data offer no insight into the maintenance of professional norms in such a situation, though the possibilities are several. They include association with newsmen, education, the ideals of Vatican II, and personal values.[47] It appears that the work is such that even bishops who have spent a little time in journalism carry forward to their administrative work some professional norms.

The editor remains caught in a powerful push-pull situation. Close to the administrative team if not part of it, the editor must also report on the functioning of the diocese. He must balance the news, religious education, and institutional information roles while managing the budget. Professional norms from an adversarial model push him toward the ideals of Vatican II; the location and support of the press pull him toward an institutional model which he resists. Primacy of news, pluralism of opinions, forum for dissent, reporter on the Church for the laity fit only with difficulty in a publication which is equally obliged to educate the faithful about the Church and carry official information.

Nor is the audience of great assistance. Griffin[48] and Gallup[49] have found the readership of these papers elderly and aging. Young readers are scarce, though readership studies have been a staple of these newspapers for some years.[50] Those people to whom the editor would reach out very often are not subscribers. Griffin observed that the age profiles of subscribers and ex-subscribers suggests that the papers may have been too conservative for the younger, but middle-aged group and find a strong if uneasy audience in the more conservative, but distinctly older population. This means editors find limited support from readers for their efforts at more independant coverage.

In the spirit of Vatican II, the editor might also hold the newspaper to be the voice of the people of the diocese rather than the voice of the chancery and take steps to maintain the bishop's financial support with full editorial autonomy. National Catholic Reporter exemplifies this approach in the extreme.[51] Professional values here led to a complete separation of a diocesan newspaper from the diocese as it became an increasingly critical, liberal voice. Financial difficulties render it an impossible move for most.

The integrity of the editors influences the work as well. There are no data on Church loyalty or religious commitment among editors, nonetheless work in the diocesan newspaper speaks to a commitment to the institution and the faith, if not to the person of the bishop. This too, creates an internal and perhaps fundamental pressure on the editor. Unlike the journalists studied by Dennis and Ismach[52] these are men of religious conviction and active membership. Pollock has reported[53] that religious commitment more than any other factor determines how people respond to a wide variety of moral and political questions. There is no reason to believe that this commitment, coupled with strong norms buttressed by Vatican II would not provide the most powerful factor in shaping an editor's views. Given conflicts with the bishop, editors might well think they have both the pope and the American way on their side.

Bishops seem to respond as one would expect chief administrators to respond. Their goals, their norms differ considerably from those of editors because of the complexity inherent in administration of dioceses. If expecting a board chairman to seek a house organ that serves only the corporation's interest is natural, so is expecting a bishop to seek the same for his organization. In fact, given the added dimension of religious instruction and active membership in church organizations, it might be surprising that bishops have been so tolerant of dissident editors. That bishops have not enforced editors to adopt norms of the public relations model may well be at the root of the dilemma.

It may be impossible to do so; it may be that bishops remain only vaguely aware of the distinctions of a professional level. It may be that they have neither time nor interest to remold the paper given other concerns, so they are quite content to hire a professional journalist to edit the paper, relying on the editor's expertise until problems force a change.

Bishops, who hire the editors and remain the primary authority of the institution, perceive a stronger institutional role than do the editors. Despite high and necessary congruence on the various possible roles of the newspaper, these two groups differ on those items central to the professional norms of the editor. Discussions between the two, which come irregularly and for relatively brief periods, focus on financial and policy questions equally, a poor socialization situation because crisis resolution tends to be the major focus. Editors find their professional norms expressed in Vatican II documents, but also find themselves operating in financial and managerial roles as well as reporting roles. Their dominant identity lies in being part of the administrative team or very close to it.

CONCLUSIONS

Editors in this segment of the press face considerable stress from the various compelling normative structures in which they work. The larger institution's norms, the local institution's norms, and the norms of their chosen model pull in different directions. As employee, the editor normally looks to his publisher to set the norms of operation. Yet the employer has a differing normative view. In some cases, the publisher refuses to set the norms, or express them vaguely leaving that to the editor, while continuing financial support of the newspaper. Financial pressures exact their own price.

This dilemma, which might be more readily resolved if the bishop and editor shared more time together on a regular basis, is not resolved by

their present contacts relationship. Further, some adjustment of the expectations of editors and bishops would have to occur to reduce the stress. Increased discussion might reduce the uncertainty for the editor, but a clearer and mutually agreeable decision on the public relations- adversarial journalism dilemma seems essential. The thrust of the larger institution has been toward a policy of more openness, yet as journalists who cover the Vatican for the Catholic press complained at their Rome congress, the pratice differs from the preachment. Diocesan editors surely find the same difficulty on some news items, Perhaps there can be no perfectly satisfactory resolution for editors as long as they hold strongly to adversarial norms and work in an institutional setting.

FOOTNOTES

[1] See, for example, Amitai Etzioni, Modern Organizations (Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964), The Semi-Professions and Their Organization (Free Press, 1969); Peter Blau and Richard Scott, Formal Organizations: A Comparative Approach (Chandler, 1962); Chris Argyris and Donald Schon, Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness (Jossey-Bass Inc., 1974); Allen Filley and Robert House, Managerial Process and Organizational Behavior (Scott, Foresman and Company, 1976).

[2] Called by Pope John XXIII in 1963 and continuing through his death and the election of Paul VI, Vatican II (as it is generally known) was a general meeting of all the bishops of the Catholic Church. Vatican II was called to update the structure and approach of the Catholic Church. As such, it brought all parts of the formal structure and practices of the church into question through documents and debate. In all, 16 documents were drafted by the bishops and approved by the pope, which produced significant alterations in the church. The documents covered the following topics: sacred liturgy, the means of social communication, dogmatic constitution of the church, Catholic Eastern Churches, ecumenism, the pastoral office of bishops, up-to-date renewal of religious life, training of priests, christian education, relations to non-christian religions, divine revelation, the apostolate of lay people, religious liberty, missionary activity, ministry and life of priests, and the Catholic Church in the modern world. In general, Vatican II granted greater authority to national councils of bishops and to local Ordinaries (bishops in charge of a diocese; many bishops are assigned to a diocese as an auxiliary or are in retirement) to define the specific religious practices under their jurisdiction. This power came at the expense of Vatican bureaus. It has been considered the most significant change in the Catholic Church since the Council of Trent (1545-1563).

[3] Michael Real, "Trends in Structure and Policy in the American Catholic Press," Journalism Quarterly Vol. 52, no. 2 (summer, 1975) pp. 265-271; John Finnegan, "Trends in Criticism: The American Catholic Press 1957-1977," The Future of The Catholic Press, Institute of the Catholic Press, Marquette University.

[4] Called the Bergamo Conference after its site, Bergamo Center in Dayton, Ohio. Eight bishops and twenty editors worked from five papers to a consensus statement. The purpose, "to make a start in establishing close and regular contact and cooperation between the American hierarchy and the American Catholic Press," according to the executive director of the Catholic Press Association. It was both the first and last such formal conference, though the annual CPA convention has begun including a session in which bishops and editors address mutual problems.

[5] The statements of consensus can be found in Appendix A.

[6] As evidenced in discussions of the conference, "The Future of The Catholic Press," June 1979, Marquette University; discussions in the CPA conventions of 1979 and 1980. During the 1980 convention in Nashville, editors at one point insisted in multiple voices that it was up to the bishops to set policy for the diocesan newspaper as a newspaper. The bishops rejected that role, insisting it was the editor's role as a professional in the area, to set the policy of the newspaper.

[7] The bishop in charge of the diocese (the Ordinary), has the newspaper as one of his administrative responsibilities. He is the chief administrative officer as well as the pastoral leader. There are several structural variations in the American church: the editor reports directly to the bishop, the editor reports to an auxiliary bishop or other chancery official, the editor reports to a board of publications.

[8] A self-sufficient diocesan newspaper is virtually unheard of outside the major metropolitan dioceses, so bishops provide direct financial subsidy or require each parish in the diocese to purchase a copy for each registered family.

[9] Paul McKeever, "Dealing with Dissent," Orgins, June 15, 1976

[10] "Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops (Christus Dominus)," Vatican Council II (Costello Publishing Co., 1975) pp. 564-591.

[11] Life, December 17, 1965.

[12] "Pastoral Instruction on the Means of Social Communication (Communio et Progressio)," Vatican Council II, op. Cit., p. 305.

[13] Finnegan, op. cit.

[14] Archbishop Philip M. Hannan, "What Bishops Think of the Catholic Press," Resource Papers and Consensus Paper of the Bishops-Editor Conference, (Catholic Press Association, 1970) pp. 41-49)

[15] Hannan, pp. 41-49. Hannan asked a series of questions about whether bishops were satisfied or dissatisfied with their own diocesan newspaper and with other Catholic newspapers. He then asked for the reasons.

[16] Gerard Sherry, "What Editors Think of Bishops," Resource Papers and Consensus Paper of the Bishop-Editor Conference (Catholic Press Association, 1970), pp. 50-56.

[17] Finnegan, op. cit.

[18] UCIP is the acronym for Union Catholique Internationale de la Presse based in Geneva, Switzerland. UCIP holds its world congress every 3 years; the most recent in Rome was the 12th congress. Its original founders came from both institutional press and the Catholic partisan press of Europe. In the view of many UCIP leaders, the diocesan press of America is quite conservative because it is an institutional press rather than an independant partisan press like National Catholic Reporter.

[19] UCIP, A Press for the People, The Relation Between Newspaper and Reader, printed by UCIP (Geneva, Switzerland, 1978). This publication provides a summary of the resolutions and transcripts of presentations of the 11th world congress, Vienna, 1977.

[20] Ibid. P. 25.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid. p. 27.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

[25] UCIP, Information No. 4 (December 1980) carries a brief summary of the resolutions and addresses. A bound volume is forthcoming. Author Thorn was responsible for drafting and presenting the resolutions in this area by the working groups discussing "Communication in the Church.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] John Deedy, "The Catholic Press," The Religious Press in America (Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1963); Real, p. 267; Finnegan, p. 48. Finnegan and Real have in mind specific editors who moved into the Catholic press from journalism schools after World War II or come from the secular press.

[30] Real, p. 267.

[31] Each of the critical themes which Finnegan identified stems from definition of the professional journalist's world: pluralism, press and authority, editor-journalist roles, negative role fulfillment, and roles and functions the Catholic press ought to fulfull. Read cites other factors which affected the newfound freedom in the years after Vatican II, particularly administrative concerns and Pope Paul VI's encyclical on birth control (Humanae Vitae) in 1968. Andrew Greeley has argued that in this period the journalists had the opportunity to lead discussion and debate within the church and simply failed for want of ability. See, Come Blow Your Mind With Me (Doubleady, 1971) pp. 143-147.

[32] Donald McDonald, "The State of the Local Catholic Press," Commonweal, February 3, 1950, p. 460. McDonald went from editorshop of the Davenport, IA, Catholic Messenger into journalism education as the Dean of the College of Journalism, Marquette University.

[33] James Scotton and William Thorn, "The Journalists In the Catholic Press Today," The Future of the Catholic Press (Institute of the Catholic Press, Marquette University, 1979), pp. 17-22.

[34] Editors complained about the withholding of news from them or the failure to allow to diocesan newspaper to break a significant story by giving it to the secular press first. But, closer to the public relations function, they complained of being told to give prominent display to story with no discussion on page 1.

[35] The great support for blanket circulation patterns and discussion in Catholic publications like America of a national Catholic daily reflect both the financial difficulty and related professional limitations posed by local orientation. Real has outlined the great shift from independently owned Catholic newspaper in the 1800's to diocesan ownership though the early years of this century. Editors and bishops express concern about making the news-

paper available and affordable to the average lay person. Subscription rates for these newspapers, which are weeklies, runs from $5 to $10 per year, with most in the $6-$8 range. Advertising rates and space tend to be low as well.

[36] Published annually by P. J. Kennedy & Sons, New York.

[37] Published annually by the Catholic Press Association, Rockville Center, New York.

[38] Three bishops who were involved in the pre-test of the survey did not participate in the study.

[39] Finnegan, pp. 58-70.

[40] Some 27 items were recommend for examination by this committee at a meeting in Charleston, S.C., November, 1978. Author Thorn participated in this committee meeting.

[41] While both groups were asked to list the major roles, no emphasis was put on rank ordering them in the questions. There was no way to make the role options perfectly comparable. In part, the goal was to determine how accurate the theme-based role statements would be as indicators of editor and bishop perceptions.

[42] The previous journalism experience broke down as follows: 6 worked in diocesan newspapers as reporters, editors, or columnists; 6 edited a school paper at the high school or college level; 1 worked in radio; 1 reported for a secular daily newspaper; 1 edited a Catholic magazine; 1 worked in a Spanish publication; 1 reported for an unnamed publication, and 2 did not state the nature of experience. One respondent simply reported "limited" experience.

[43] This listing is abbreviated to avoid listing citations given by only a few bishops or editors.

44 L'Osservatore Romano is considered the most reliable indicator of papal thinking and official statement. It is published in several languages, and is available by mail service in the United States.

[45] Op. cit.

[46] See, for example Warren Breed, "Social Control in the Newsroom: A Functional Analysis," Social Forces, May 1955 and Lee sigelman, "Reporting the News: An Organizational Analysis," American Journal of Sociology 79 (July 1973) for the two perspectives on socialization. Breed assumes editors learned the social rules to become editors and teach reporters and rules; sigelman suggestes that reporters may come to a paper predisposed to its particular norms as a result of choice of newspaper type. Sigleman seems to offer a more useful approach for study of the Catholic Press, because working in this area results from a very clear choice between secular and religious press. Even where no job opportunity exists in the secular press, choosing to work in the Catholic press is a choice of type of press with all of the overtones of both religious and specificially Catholic press.

[47] See, for example, John Johnston, Edward Slawski, and William Bowman, Newspeople (University of Illinois Press, 1976) for the protrait of American journalists, their norms, and their backgrounds. See also, Stuart Schwartz, "Inner-Directed and Other-Directed Values of Professional Journalists," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 55, no. 4 (Winter 1978), pp. 721-725 for the impact of professional schools on journalists. See Gaye Tuchman, "Objectivity as Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newspaperman's Notions of Objectivity," American Journal of Sciology, Vol. 77, no. 4, pp. 660-679. The whole area bears considerable examination given the pressures for journalists in this situation to change.

[48] Robert Griffin, "Information Seeking and Usage by Milwaukee Area Catholics," The Furture of the Catholic Press (Institute of the Catholic Press, Marquette University, 1979) pp. 23-39.

[49] George Gallup, report to the Catholic Press Association convention, Nashville, TN, May 1980 . Gallup reported on part of the study commissioned by the CPA. Gallup's findings essentially replicated Griffin's findings.

[50] Readership studies, however, tend to focus on present subscribers and readers rather than those who no longer subscribe or seldom read the paper. A straw poll of 60 editors at a conference on the Catholic press turned up 60 who had studied their readership in the past 3 years.

[51] Operating originally as a diocesan newspaper, National Catholic Reporter employed a group of journalism school educated reporters and gradually became totally independent from the diocese, in part because it bacame more adversarial than the institution could tolerate. For a time conservatives argued that it ought to take Catholic out of its title because it was so removed from official church teaching and so critical of all aspects of the American church.

[52] Everette Dennis and Arnold Ismach, "A Profile of Newspaper and Television Reporters in the Metropolitan Setting," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 55, no. 4 (Winter 1978), pp. 739-743.

[53] John C. Pollock, "Study Finds Religion's Role Underrated," New York Times March 31, 1981, p. 17 col. 3-5. Pollock's study, commissioned for Research and Forecasts, Inc., concludes that religion plays a dominant role in the lives of most Americans other than public leaders.

APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF PRELIMINARY CONSENSUS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

The basic purpose of the diocesan press is to enlighten the Catholic about his world and his role in it.

The diocesan press fulfills this purpose:

By interpreting fully, fairly and accurately and events of the day as they relate to the Christian in his community.

By helping to create that community.

By informing and instructing its readers.

By reflecting the prophetic mission of the Church, through exhortation and inspiration.

By helping readers to see God speaking to man in the events of the times.

By a process of continuing education leading to an enlightened public opinion.

By providing a forum for dialogue within the body of the Church.

By helping to fulfill the bishop's obligation to teach and instruct the people to God .. and to hear them in return.

By striving to convey the Christian meaning of human events to all segments of the general community.

In order to achieve the above, there must be a definition of the roles of publisher and editor, a mutual trust and understanding and frequent direct communication between them. It was recommended that the bishop-publisher consider sharing his responsibility through establishment of a board, widely representative of the diocese as a whole, to assist both publisher and editor in producing a better newspaper. The editor must recognize the bishop's pastoral responsibility and the bishop must recognize the editor's necessary freedom. Both should recognize that the right to information is a right of the reader which should not be abridged.

Reporting news involves good news and bad, joys and sorrows, order and disorder. In this regard Pope Paul VI told members of the Catholic press: "Your professional conscience can impose on you the duty of reporting untoward happenings which occur in certain areas of the ecclesial community. But it also obliges you to put them in proper perspective and not to exaggerate them, and above all not to give the impression that you approve them, or that you try to justify them, especially when the magisterium (the teaching authority of the Church) and the entire tradition of the Church reproves them." -- Pope Paul VI to the council of the International Catholic Union of the Press, November 23, 1969.

APPENDIX B

PRESS ROLE STATEMENTS AND MEANS OF BISHOPS AND EDITORS[1]

Statements	Bishops[2]	Editors[3]	d score
1. The diocesan newspaper should provide information about the Church ignored or played down by the secular press.	1.4674	1.6100	-0.1426
2. The diocesan newspaper should serve as a bridge between the Catholic reader and events in the secular world.	1.9438	1.6700	+0.2738
3. The diocesan newspaper should serve as a means of religious instruction and teahcing.	1.3043	1.5800	-0.2757
4. The diocesan newspaper should represent a pluralism of opinions within the Church on social and political issues that face the Church.	2.1413	1.7100	+0.4313
5. The diocesan press should report fairly, completely, and accurately on problems that confront the diocesan leadership and the diocese.	1.7143	1.5657	+0.1486
6. Diocesan newspapers should strive to present a positive image of the Church.	1.5109	1.9394	-0.4285
7. Lay people have a right to a diocesan press that reflects on their opinions and concerns about the Church.	1.8333	1.5800	+0.2533
8, Diocesan newspapers should serve as one of the vehicles by which the bishop fulfills his ministry to his people.	1.2609	1.3800	-0.1191

Statement	Bishops	Editors	d score
9. Diocesan newspapers have an obligation to report dissident theological views in a manner that clearly identifies them as dissident and not as official church teaching.	1.9444	1.6900	+0.2544
10. Diocesan newspapers should be a forum for discussion of diverse theological and scriptual views.	3.2637	2.6800	+0.5837
11. Diocesan newspapers should create a sense of community among believers in the diocese.	1.3548	1.3800	-0.0252

[1]The range is based on the following responses on a Likert-type scale of items: 1= strongly agree, 2= agree, 3= no opinion, 4= desagree, and 5= strongly disagree.

[2]Nsize for the sample of bishops ranges from 89 to 93 on these 11 items.

[3]N size for the sample of editors is 100, except for items 5 and 6, where N=99.